

*Agency of Human Services  
"HousingNOW" Plan  
Barre District - May 12, 2008*

*The mission of the Vermont Agency of Human Services is "to improve the health and well-being of Vermonters today & tomorrow, & to protect those who are unable to protect themselves."*

*Stable, affordable housing is critical to an individual & family's well-being. Our goal for HousingNow is to alleviate homelessness, prevent the loss of housing & deliver services to Vermonters through a comprehensive & holistic approach.*

The Field Directors have been charged with developing and implementing a *HousingNow* plan. This plan reflects our interest in supporting an organized approach to achieving an integrated system of care for individuals and families in shelters, transitional housing, or who are about to lose their homes.

Desired Result: Alleviate homelessness by providing supportive housing for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. To succeed in achieving this goal, we will:

- develop an Agency & community-wide integrated approach to homelessness prevention;
- identify both financial & human resources to lead efforts within our communities; &
- assist in locating housing for those who are homeless.

Goal #1: Implement *HousingNow* in partnership with the local Continuum of Care and other key housing partners by developing and maintaining a local structure that connects our housing efforts and prevents homelessness. The structure includes our local emergency shelter, all of our transitional housing and permanent supportive housing programs and our General Assistance funding..

a) current status: During 2007, our Continuum of Care considered a proposal from field services regarding a collaborative "staffing" model. The proposal will be finalized for final review in May of 2008.

b) current objectives: Approve staffing model by May 12, 2008 and implement during June of 2008. Design a brief process for evaluating the effectiveness of this model.

c) obstacles or opportunities: Critical issues anticipated during final review and implementation include:

- confidentiality
- staff time to manage the process

Goal #2: Develop partnerships with housing suppliers, managers and landlords ensuring support services for homeless and at-risk of homeless clients to enable them to maintain their permanent housing.

a) current status: Despite best efforts, partnerships are not fully realized. Active membership in our Continuum of Care leans more toward housing advocates and service providers.

b) current objectives: During our June 2008 Continuum of Care team meeting, we will request a review of team membership to assure full representation across the housing spectrum.

c) obstacles or opportunities: We anticipate time and workload will present challenges as well as whether our meeting day and time encourages or discourages participation by people we seek to join the Continuum of Care.

Goal #3: Identify a lead agency or entity to ensure success of service coordination, on-going case management, and positive landlord relations.

a) current status: Our district does not have a single point of entry or entity through which all citizens can begin their search for housing and receive supports needed during that process.

\* Current efforts include our rental opportunity center, service coordination and a housing specialist through Central VT Community Action Council, among others.

b) current objectives: Inventory what parts of the system are in place, how they relate to one another and whether we can improve our effort to assist local citizens. We're recommending this inventory take place before August 1, 2008.

c) obstacles or opportunities: No new resources to support an organization should they wish to serve as the point of entry.

Goal #4: Integrate resources within the community. Statewide restructured GA will be included as a resource.

a) current status: Financial and staff resources are spread across our community and can benefit from a cohesive, comprehensive approach.

b) current objectives: Collection of information (financial data, outcomes) regarding current housing Agency of Human Services contracts and grants. The AHS Field Director will be part of any renewal discussion of any existing AHS housing contract.

\* We'll assess whether the Family Unification Program (FUP), currently administered through DCF-Family Services, is being used to its fullest.

\* AHS Field Services will attempt to coordinate the many efforts to create emergency, transitional and supportive housing.

\* We'll have 211 and screen door information available at our Rental Opportunity Center.

\* Barre AHS will initiate a policy to identify individuals and families on our caseloads who may be at risk of homelessness and refer them to the Continuum of Care and the Rental Opportunity Center.

- \* Determine location of a website through which we can gather information about all of current and future efforts.
- \* Increase awareness of the Rental Opportunity Center.
- c) obstacles or opportunities: We're hoping to receive additional information about what resources we currently have at our disposal (not locked into existing contracts) or what a restructured GA program will mean for the Barre AHS district. Having such information will allow our Continuum of Care team to think creatively about the opportunities. Given that this may be the time during which many contracts and grants are being reviewed, we hope we can develop a method to be included in these reviews.

Goal #5: Expand on Best Practices already in place. Develop mechanisms for client accountability and reciprocity for services.

- a) current status: There are various viewpoints regarding what represents "best practice".
- b) current objectives: By September 1, 2008, we'll inventory current "best practices" within our community as well as examples from other areas. Following such a review, our Continuum of Care will recommend implementation of "best practices" designed to improve our outcomes. We will fully utilize the 211 Shelter Bed Tracker database
- c) obstacles or opportunities: None anticipated, other than time and workload.

Goal #6: Enhance and leverage resources through local contributions from business and other community organizations.

- a) current status: The local Field Services office has limited knowledge of existing resources available from business and other community organizations.
- b) current objectives - By June 1, 2008 we expect to have additional details.
- c) obstacles or opportunities - Additional information and/or guidance.

Goal #7: Compile data according to a specific, consistent, statewide standard to track measurable outcomes and identify systems challenges.

- a) current status: Other than the annual "point in time" and individual organizational data collection to satisfy funders, data are not compiled for to assess local outcome achievement. A centralized data collection tool is being developed by the Interagency Housing Committee on Homelessness.
- b) current objectives: By May 30, 2008, our objective is to have more details regarding expectations for the compilation of community-wide data.
- c) obstacles or opportunities: The implementation of the statewide data collection form will require a commitment from our Continuum of Care. We will need time to develop a protocol regarding who will do what to assure the data is entered and how. Finally, we hope there's a statewide commitment to using the data form exactly the same across the 12 AHS districts so we can rely on the data for comparative purposes.